

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SECTOR: REFORESTATION

◆ INDIANA

Living Memorial® Tree Planting Program

In 1976 the Batesville Casket Company of Batesville, Indiana and its funeral director customers initiated a Living Memorial Program in conjunction with the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service. For every casket or urn purchased from the company, a tree seedling is planted in a national forest at no extra cost as a tribute to the deceased. This serves the double purpose of creating a lasting memorial to a loved one as well as ensuring the continuation of a vital natural resource—our forests. Although the planted trees bear no visible identification, the family receives a letter and certificate notifying them that a tree has been planted in memoriam. Quarterly payments are then made to the US Forest Service, which is responsible for the actual tree planting. The public response has been extremely favorable; each week the company receives approximately 50 thank you letters.



The program has grown to include partnerships with Canada, Australia, and Great Britain, although 97% of the trees planted through the program are planted in the United States. According to the US Forest Service, the program is now the largest private reforestation project in the US and is a 1999 recipient of a Project Award from the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Results:

Since 1976, 8,149,530 trees (corresponding to about 14,500 acres) have been planted through the Living Memorial Tree Planting Program. Currently, approximately 400,000 trees are planted each year. Of these, 388,000 are planted in National Forests within the US. In addition to sheltering wildlife, preventing erosion, replenishing oxygen, and other benefits, each living tree absorbs carbon through photosynthesis thereby slowing the rate of accumulation of CO₂ in the air. Although the amount of CO₂ sequestered varies depending on tree type, age and growing conditions, an average tree can store approximately 50 pounds of carbon dioxide per year over its lifetime.* This means that the trees planted through the Living Memorial Program remove 184,800 metric tons of CO₂ (50,400 MTCE*) each year. Each year, an additional CO₂ removal capacity of 9,070 metric tons CO₂ (2,470 MTCE*) is added to this total.

Greenhouse Gas Reductions	Trees Planted
50,400 MTCE*/yr (2,470 MTCE* capacity added each year)	8,149,530 total 400,000/yr

Principal Actors:

The Batesville Casket Company, its funeral director customers, and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

Additional Information:

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This case study is based on information provided by Joe Weigel and Linda Ostendorf at the Batesville Casket Company (www.batesville.com) and by Jeff Bargar at the National Arbor Day Foundation.

*Original data have been converted from number of trees planted to Metric Tons Carbon Equivalent (MTCE) using an average value of 50 pounds carbon dioxide sequestered per tree per year retrieved from the American Forests website (www.amfor.org) on September 13, 1999.